

# **Citizen Participation Plan**

## **City of Newton Housing and Community Development Program October 2009**

The City of Newton annually receives Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) and Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Community Development (HUD) which it administers through the Housing and Community Development Division of the Planning and Development Department. The primary purpose of these formula grant programs is to develop viable communities through the provision of decent housing, a suitable living environment and expanding economic opportunities for low- and moderate-income persons. As a recipient of these entitlement program funds, the City is required to produce the following documents:

- Consolidated Plan – a five-year plan that documents Newton's housing and community development needs, outlines strategies to address those needs, and identifies proposed program accomplishments
- Annual Action Plan – an annual plan that describes specific CDBG-, HOME- and ESG-funded projects that will be undertaken over the course of the upcoming fiscal year
- Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) – an annual report that evaluates the use of CDBG, HOME and ESG funds

This Citizen Participation Plan has been developed to provide citizens and other interested parties with opportunities to participate in an advisory role in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the CDBG, HOME and ESG programs which primarily benefit Newton's low- and moderate-income residents and to review and comment on each of the documents listed above.

Citizen participation in CDBG, HOME and ESG program activities ranges from conducting needs assessments and strategic planning to project selection, development, implementation and evaluation. The Citizen Participation Plan outlines the City's responsibility for providing opportunities for active citizen participation. The goals of the Citizen Participation Plan are to:

- Encourage citizen participation by all Newton residents, emphasizing the involvement of low- and moderate-income residents, people living in CDBG target neighborhoods, people with disabilities, minorities and residents of assisted housing;
- Inform citizens of the Newton Consolidated Plan and the Annual Action Plan, including funds available from CDBG, HOME, ESG and other Continuum of Care Homeless Programs and eligible activities under these programs;
- Give all citizens an opportunity to identify and respond to priority needs;
- Give all citizens an opportunity to identify and respond to priority proposed projects and the use of funds; and
- Give all citizens an opportunity to review and comment on program performance.

### **1. Process for Citizen Participation**

Opportunities for citizen participation in the planning and development of the Newton Consolidated Plan, the subsequent Annual Action Plan and the CAPER will be provided through several levels of community involvement and outreach, including:

#### Individual Citizens

The participation of individual citizens is the foundation of the City of Newton's Housing and Community Development Program. Reasonable efforts will be made to make all citizens aware

of the Program-related meetings and events in their neighborhoods, as well as public hearings and citywide events that are related to the development of the Consolidated Plan, the Annual Action Plan and the CAPER. It is the goal of the Program to create opportunities for ample participation for all interested citizens, including, but not limited to, low- and moderate-income residents, persons living in CDBG target neighborhoods, people with disabilities, minorities and residents of assisted housing.

#### Citizen Advisory Committees

In order to ensure citizen participation in all of the CDBG-, HOME- and ESG-funded program areas, a number of citizen advisory committees have been created, with membership appointed by the Mayor. These advisory committees make funding, programmatic and policy recommendations to the Planning and Development Board, which then makes recommendations to the Mayor.

- **Target Neighborhood Advisory Committees**

Open meetings are held at least biannually in Newton's four CDBG "target neighborhoods" (the neighborhoods which have the highest concentration of low- and moderate-income residents). Each Target Neighborhood Advisory Committee is comprised of up to 15 Newton volunteers. The Newton Corner Advisory Committee, the Newtonville Advisory Committee, the Nonantum Advisory Committee and the West Newton Advisory Committee are each chaired by a member elected by the Committee. Aldermen representing the target neighborhood are considered "de facto" members and as such, may vote when no conflict of interest is present. Members are appointed for a term concurrent with the five-year Consolidated Plan and must reside in the target neighborhood at the time of their appointment.

In addition to appointed members, the Housing and Community Development Division also maintains a list of "interested citizens", made up of individuals who have expressed an interest in the Program. The Committees' recommendations for the expenditure of CDBG funds are the result of efforts to inform neighborhood residents, to solicit their input and to reach decisions that will provide the greatest benefit to the neighborhood. The Committees also serve in an advisory capacity for the implementation of projects in their neighborhood.

- **Human Service Advisory Committee**

The Human Service Advisory Committee is an advisory body made up of 11 Newton volunteers. The Committee members participate in public focus groups to help identify human service needs of Newton residents to include in the five-year Consolidated Plan. The Committee meets annually to review all applications for CDBG human service and ESG projects using criteria that include project eligibility and a documented need for service. The Committee then recommends grant awards to applicant providers who best meet these criteria. These recommendations are reviewed by the Planning and Development Board and approved by the Mayor before the grants are awarded. In addition to their work reviewing applications and making funding recommendations, the Committee meets at least quarterly to review program progress reports and expenditures. They also participate in the annual process of on-site monitoring of grantees.

- **Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities**

The Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities is a nine-member committee representing a wide array of disabilities. The Committee holds public meetings to gather data on existing access needs in the city and makes recommendations to the Planning and Development Board concerning proposed CDBG-funded access improvement projects and other CDBG-funded construction projects. This is only one of the Committee's responsibilities. They also work towards obtaining two broader goals: achieving equal access to civic life and activities for

people with disabilities and increasing community awareness of the environmental barriers faced by people with disabilities.

- **Economic Development Advisory Committee**

After staff determines that a loan or grant request is eligible for CDBG funds, the Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC), a committee appointed by the Mayor and representing local lenders, business owners and nonprofit organizations, reviews the application based on underwriting criteria. The Committee also periodically evaluates CDBG-funded economic development programs to ensure that they are meeting the needs of the community. The Mayor has allowed the EDAC the authority to make loan and grant awards; however, recommendations for policy and programmatic changes must be made to the Planning and Development Board and approved by the Mayor.

- **Newton Housing Partnership**

While the Newton Housing Partnership plays a critical role in the review and evaluation of CDBG- and HOME-funded projects, they are also instrumental in shaping housing policy for the city as a whole. The Partnership's mission is to foster, support and initiate land use, planning and fiscal policies and actions that ensure the development and preservation of housing to serve a socially and economically diverse community. In order to fulfill its mission, the Partnership acts in an advisory capacity to the Mayor, the Board of Aldermen and its committees, the Planning and Development Board, the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Community Preservation Committee and the City staff. Consisting of approximately 20 members, the Newton Housing Partnership represents Newton residents, organizations, businesses and institutions which are based in Newton or which serve the housing needs of Newton residents. Generally, the Partnership meets on the second Wednesday of every month at Newton City Hall.

#### Organizations, Agencies and the Newton Housing Authority

In developing a plan for the best use of CDBG, HOME and ESG funds, the Newton Housing and Community Development Program relies heavily on the input of other agencies involved in the development and implementation of projects to assist low- and moderate-income citizens, including the Newton Housing Authority, many area nonprofit organizations and state housing and community development agencies. These agencies and organizations are encouraged to participate in the development of the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan and CAPER and are asked to review and comment on the proposed documents.

#### Planning and Development Board

The Planning and Development Board, acting as the Community Development Board, is the citizen body that considers the recommendations made by the citizen advisory committees, other Newton agencies and organizations and citizens related to the CDBG, HOME and ESG Programs. Following a public hearing to allow for open discussion, the Planning and Development Board forwards recommendations to the Mayor for final review and approval. When funding requests are made to the Planning and Development Board, acting as the Community Development Board, representatives of the party requesting project funding and also the citizen advisory committee recommending the funding present the proposal to the Board.

Public hearings on the proposed Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan and CAPER are conducted by the Board, as well as public hearings for proposed changes to the Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan. The Board is composed of residents of the City of Newton and is comprised of six full-members (one of which is appointed by the state Secretary of Housing

and Community Development) and up to five alternate members. Unless their schedule is disrupted by a holiday or inclement weather, the Planning and Development Board meets on the first Monday of every month at Newton City Hall.

### Board of Aldermen

The Board of Aldermen is the final citizen policy body that reviews and takes action on the Consolidated Plan and the Annual Action Plan. After receiving the plan from the Mayor, the Board of Aldermen considers and then votes on the approval of the submission of the proposed Plan and on acceptance of the CDBG, HOME and ESG grants from HUD. After the Aldermen approve it, the Plan is submitted to HUD.

## **2. Public Meetings and Public Hearings**

Citizen advisory committees conduct public meetings to solicit public input on the Housing and Community Development Program. Even though each committee is made up of members appointed by the Mayor, all meetings are open to the public and participation is encouraged. Project recommendations made by the citizen advisory committees are considered by the Planning and Development Board at a public hearing.

Public hearings are required by law in order to obtain the public's views and to provide the public with the City's responses to public questions and proposals. As stated earlier, the entity responsible for conducting public hearings for the Newton Housing and Community Development Program is the Planning and Development Board. As required by law, the Planning and Development Board holds at least two public hearings each year to solicit input on housing and community needs, to review proposed uses of funds and to assess how funds were spent during the previous program year.

The two public hearings are:

- Proposed Annual Action Plan public hearing (generally held in March)
- Annual performance public hearing for the proposed CAPER (generally held in September)

During the development of the Consolidated Plan (once every five years), an additional three public hearings will be held. The three public hearings are:

- Proposed Citizen Participation Plan public hearing
- Needs assessment public hearing for the Consolidated Plan
- Proposed Consolidated Plan public hearing

In addition to the public hearings listed above, the Planning and Development Board will conduct a public hearing whenever a substantial change is proposed to the use of CDBG, HOME or ESG Program funds from that which was listed in the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan.

A substantial change is defined, in accordance with 24 CFR 91.505(a), as:

- A substantial change in allocation priorities (any change greater than 25 percent in an individual project budget) or a substantial change in the method of distribution of funds;
- An activity (including those funded exclusively with program income) not previously covered by the Newton Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan; or a
- Substantial change in the purpose, scope, location or beneficiaries of an activity.

Public hearings are held at Newton City Hall in a location that meets ADA accessibility standards. Reasonable accommodations will be made for people with disabilities upon request. Language interpreters will be provided for non-English speaking participants upon advance request.

Citizens and other interested parties may present oral comments at the time of the hearing and/or submit written comments for 30 days after the public hearing for the proposed Consolidated Plan and any substantial changes and for 15 days after public hearings for the proposed Citizen Participation Plan, Annual Action Plan, CAPER. The City will consider the views of all citizens, organizations and agencies, and other interested groups in preparing the final Citizen Participation Plan, Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan and CAPER.

### **3. Notice of Meetings**

All public meetings and public hearings are open to the public. Participation is encouraged. The following paragraphs describe the efforts that will be made to notify the public of public meetings and public hearings.

#### Public Meetings of the Advisory Committees

With the exception of the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities, meeting notices are mailed or e-mailed to both appointed members and interested citizens' mailing lists maintained by the Planning and Development Department. Meeting notices for the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities are e-mailed or mailed by the Human Services Department, the department with responsibility for providing the Committee with staff support. All meeting notices are posted on the Public Notice Board on the first floor of Newton City Hall, on the City's website in the City Calendar and are listed in the Planning and Development Department's weekly "Friday Report," which is e-mailed or mailed to more than 200 City officials, agency/organization representatives and residents.

#### Public Hearings of the Planning and Development Board

- Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan and CAPER  
Public notices for public hearings for the proposed Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and CAPER will be advertised in the *Newton TAB* at least ten days prior to each hearing. Meeting notices for the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and CAPER will be e-mailed or mailed to Board members and posted on the Public Notice Board and broadcast on the television monitor, both on the first floor of City Hall. These meeting notices will also be e-mailed or mailed (as requested by recipients) to all advisory committee members as well as the list of interested citizens for each advisory committee. Notice will also be provided on the City's website in the City Calendar and listed in the Planning and Development Department's weekly "Friday Report" which is e-mailed or mailed to over 200 City officials, agency/organization representatives and residents.
- Amendments to the Proposed Use of Funds  
Notices for public hearings for amendments to the use of funds proposed in the Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan will be e-mailed or mailed to Board members and to members and interested citizens of the advisory committee(s) with oversight over the topic(s) at hand. Notice will also be posted on the Public Notice Board and broadcast on the television monitor on the first floor of City Hall. Notice will also be provided on the City's website in the City Calendar and listed in the Planning and Development Department's weekly "Friday Report" which is e-mailed or mailed to more than 200 City officials, agency/organization representatives and residents.

#### **4. Availability of the proposed Citizen Participation Plan, Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan and CAPER**

Notice of the availability of the proposed Citizen Participation Plan, Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan and CAPER will be published in the *Newton TAB* at least ten days prior to the public hearing. The notice will summarize the content and purpose of these proposed documents and will include a list of locations where copies of the documents may be examined. At a minimum, copies of the proposed Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan and CAPER will be available in the Newton Housing and Community Development Office and on the Housing and on the Community Development Division's section of the Planning and Development Department's web page, located at <http://www.ci.newton.ma.us/planning/whatsnew.html>.

#### **5. Access to Information**

In addition to opportunities to make oral comments at public meetings of the advisory committee and public hearings before the Planning and Development Board, any citizen, organization, agency or other interested party may submit written requests for information and submit written comments regarding the proposed Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan and CAPER, and amendments to each, including the proposed use of funds and the benefit to low- and moderate-income residents. Copies of documents will be made available in other languages and/or in other formats (i.e. larger print) upon request. Documents from prior years will also be available upon request for at least the preceding five years.

Additionally, plans to minimize displacement and assist those displaced as a result of the activities in the Consolidated Plan and the Annual Action Plan are attached to this document.

#### **6. Comments**

Citizens, organizations, agencies and other interested parties are encouraged to submit their comments on the proposed Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan and CAPER. All comment periods will begin the day of the public hearing held by the Planning and Development Board. Minimum comment periods are listed below:

<b>Type of Public Hearing</b>	<b>Comment Period</b>
Consolidated Plan	30 calendar days
Annual Action Plan	15 calendar days
CAPER	15 calendar days
Substantial Changes	30 calendar days

The City of Newton will consider all comments in preparing its final Citizen Participation Plan, Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan and CAPER for submission to HUD, and will include a summary of all comments received and the actions taken to address each comment.

Comments may be submitted via mail, e-mail or fax to:

Housing and Community Development Program  
Newton Planning and Development Department  
1000 Commonwealth Avenue  
Newton, MA 02459  
E-mail: [nhcd@newtonma.gov](mailto:nhcd@newtonma.gov), fax: 617-796-1142  
Phone: 617.796.1125, TDD/TTY 617-796-1089

## **7. Timely Response**

The City of Newton will respond in writing within 15 days to any written comments, questions or complaints received regarding the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, CAPER or the Newton Housing and Community Development Program in general.

## **8. Technical Assistance**

Upon request, Newton Housing and Community Development Program staff will provide technical assistance to groups representing low- and moderate-income persons to develop funding requests for CDBG-, HOME- or ESG-eligible activities.

## **9. Use of the Citizen Participation Plan**

The City of Newton will be required to adhere to this Citizen Participation Plan, once adopted, as the official mechanism for obtaining citizen input into the Consolidated Plan process and during the administration of the programs covered by this Plan.

## **10. Jurisdiction Responsibility**

The requirements for citizen participation shall not restrict the responsibility or authority of the jurisdiction for the development and execution of its Consolidated Plan. The sole and final responsibility and authority to make determinations regarding the City's CDBG, HOME and ESG funding rests exclusively with the Mayor.

## **ANTI-DISPLACEMENT AND RELOCATION PLAN**

(attached to the Citizen Participation Plan)

### **Permanent Relocation**

It is the policy of the City of Newton Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) programs and the WestMetro HOME Consortium to take all reasonable steps to minimize displacement as a result of CDBG- and HOME-assisted projects, including:

- Considering whether displacement will occur during feasibility determinations
- Identifying potential relocation workload and resources early
- Assuring, whenever possible, that residential occupants of buildings rehabilitated are offered an opportunity to return
- Planning rehabilitation projects to include “staging” where this would eliminate temporary displacement
- Following notification procedures carefully so that families do not leave because they are not informed about planned projects or their rights

When a project does require relocation, in order to ensure the timely issuance of information notices to displaced households, etc., staff of the City of Newton Housing and Community Development Division or of the WestMetro HOME Consortium member communities will ensure that all notices are sent in compliance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (URA).

### **Temporary Relocation**

Temporary relocation often occurs as the result of lead abatement and other rehabilitation activities in renter- and owner-occupied units. Although the City of Newton Housing and Community Development Division is not required to, in most cases it pays for the temporary relocation of displaced renters and/or homeowners whose residences are being rehabilitated.